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# A SHORT

# ACCOUNT

## OF THE

# *AFRICAN SLAVE-TRADE.*

By ROBERT NORRIS.

A NEW EDITION CORRECTED.

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(Illustrated by a NEW MAP of the SLAVE COAST, comprehended between the River Volta and Benin, with Cape Lagos.)

MEMOIRS of the REIGN of BOSSA AHADEE, KING OF DAHOMY, an Inland Country of Guinea; to which are added, the Author's Tour to ABOMEY, the Capital; and a Short Account of the African Slave Trade.

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# A SHORT
# ACCOUNT
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# *AFRICAN SLAVE-TRADE.*

AS the African Slave-Trade has been of late the ſubject of public examination and of private diſcuſſion, a brief account of it may not perhaps be unacceptable to thoſe who have had no opportunity of hearing the evidence that has been given at the bar of both houſes of parliament, or leiſure to peruſe the various publications which the preſent inquiry has occaſioned.

A trade for Negro ſlaves is carried on from the river Senegal in 16 deg. north latitude,

to Cape Negro, in 16 deg. ſouth: which comprehends a tract of near four thouſand miles of ſea coaſt; and includes the greateſt part of the interior country, within the above limits, from the confines of Mount Atlas, acroſs the immenſe continent of Africa, to Mozambique, on the eaſtern coaſt.

From the nations bordering on the rivers Senegal and Gambia, the emperor of Morocco procures annually recruits for his black cavalry; and his ſubjects are furniſhed from thence with whatever ſlaves they have occaſion for. Caravans alſo travel from thence acroſs the continent, to Upper Egypt, with conſiderable numbers of Negro ſlaves; who are forwarded from thence either from Alexandria, by ſea, or marched through Aſia Minor, to Conſtantinople. From the ſame country, including the diſtricts towards the river Sierra Leon, ſlaves are collected for ſupplying the different ſtates of Barbary; from the ports of which, ſome of theſe ſlaves are ſent to the Morea, and to the Turkiſh iſlands in the Mediterranean: hence it is, that the African coaſt from Senegal to Sierra Leon affords, comparatively, but few ſlaves

to the European traders. From Mozambique, and the ports on the eaſtern coaſt of Africa, great numbers are ſent to Perſia, Goa, and other parts of the Eaſt Indies; and in proportion as the culture of the Weſt Indian Iſlands, and of the European ſettlements in America, has been extended, a demand for the labour of African Negroes has regularly increaſed there; and now amounts to about eighty thouſand annually: of which the Britiſh purchaſe about forty thouſand; the French, twenty thouſand; the Portugueſe, ten thouſand; the Dutch, ſix thouſand; and the Danes, four thouſand.—Of the forty thouſand purchaſed by the Britiſh, about a twentieth part are calculated to die on the voyage; and three-fourths of thoſe that arrive in the Weſt Indies, are diſpoſed of to the French and Spaniards; the remainder are diſtributed in the Britiſh iſlands, the greater part of which continues ſtill in a ſtate of nature. Jamaica will require an addition of five or ſix thouſand ſlaves annually, for many years, to complete its cultivation. This is the caſe alſo, though in a leſs degree, of the iſlands of Grenada, Dominica, St. Vincent,

and ſome other places; particularly the Bahamas and the Bay of Honduras: the Bahamas are now the retreat of the unfortunate Loyaliſts, who having been baniſhed from the United States, have a virgin ſoil to work upon, which promiſes no ungrateful return, as ſoon as the neceſſary labourers can be procured; and the Bay of Honduras affords an aſylum to thoſe Britiſh ſettlers, who have lately been obliged to abandon their poſſeſſions on the Moſquitto ſhore.

When the prodigious demand for African Negroes, which has exiſted for time immemorial in Mauritania, Egypt, Perſia, and the Eaſt, is conſidered; and in addition to that the immenſe exportation of late years to America and the Weſt Indies, it might be preſumed, that a viſible decreaſe of inhabitants would be the conſequence of theſe annual drains; but from the concurrent teſtimony of the moſt intelligent perſons, who have viſited that country, it does not appear that this ſpeculation is juſtified by experience.

They who have been both in Africa and America, ſay that they have been ſtruck with

with the appearance of nearly the ſame population as in the ſtate of Virginia, in thoſe parts of Africa that lie upon the Coaſt; and add, that from the beſt imformation which they could get, the interior parts are at leaſt as fully inhabited, as thoſe which they had an opportunity of ſeeing. Virginia comprehends about thirty thouſand ſquare miles, and, including the Negroes, is ſaid to contain eight hundred thouſand inhabitants: taking this for the baſis of a calculation, it may reaſonably be preſumed that Negroland, which extends, as was mentioned before, from the Senegal to Cape Negro, and from the Atlantic eaſtward to the Indian Ocean, and contains, excluſive of Nubia and Abiſſinia, at leaſt, four millions of ſquare miles, cannot have leſs than one hundred and ſix millions of inhabitants; which are more than Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Italy, Holland and Switzerland collectively contain.

A late writer*, who was well acquainted with Africa, from his long reſidence there,

* The late Governor Hippiſly, of Cape Coaſt Caſtle; whoſe account may be had from the publiſher of this work.

has pointed out the very different circumſtances of Europe and Africa, with regard to the advantages and diſadvantages attending the propagation of the ſpecies in each. What numbers of both ſexes, ſays he, are there in the European world, who grow up and die without ever having children! The increaſe of luxury has always been an enemy to matrimony; and accordingly, we find many decline it from choice, and many from neceſſity. The vain are deterred from it, from an unwillingneſs to abridge any part of the ſplendor of their appearance; and the indigent, from a certainty of multiplying their neceſſities. The long abſence of men from their wives, on account of trade and other avocations, to ſay nothing of war and its waſteful conſequences, neceſſarily reduces the number of births. A ſtate of ſervitude precludes a ſtate of matrimony, in a great part of the community; for there are few who will keep a married ſervant of either ſex; but above all, religion, in the Roman Catholic countries, ſtrikes the heavieſt blow at propagation. Theſe, and other obſtacles to marriage and population, which exiſt, and

are likely to continue in Europe, prevent a yearly recruit of at leaſt ſome millions of people; yet under all theſe diſadvantages, the number of its inhabitants are ſuppoſed to increaſe.

In Africa none of theſe impediments prevail: there we find deſire, unchecked by the dread of want, taking its full ſcope. A turn to ſpeculation, retirement and abſtracted ſtudies, reſolutions of celibacy from diſappointed love, unmarried ſervants, long voyages, and religious vows, are utterly unknown. Their wars are not attended with the ſame circumſtances of deſtruction as ours *; and here are no impediments againſt purſuing the dictates of natural inclination. Polygamy is univerſally practiſed in Africa, and contributes greatly to its populouſneſs. It would be hurtful to the population of Europe; where the number of males and females born is nearly equal, or at leaſt differs only about as much as to make up for the number of the former that are cut off, by accidents attending their active ſtate: but in Africa,

* Long voyages, tedious impriſonments, ſhipwrecks, bombardments, &c. &c.

where

where no man goes without a wife from a ſcarcity of women, and in ſhort an unmated black man is ſeldom or never ſeen; where the richeſt men, having many wives, do not prevent the pooreſt from having one or two, the number of women muſt greatly exceed that of the men: nor is this a ſingular caſe, for the ſame happens at Bantam, and other parts of the Eaſt Indies, that lie in the ſame latitude: beſides the number of men every year ſlaughtered and ſacrificed in Africa, there is a great majority of male ſlaves carried out of it, which ſtill adds very much to the relative proportion of women left behind; ſo that there muſt be an advantage to population in admitting polygamy in a country, where almoſt every man may have two or three wives, and ſeveral, as many hundreds. Hence it is, that Africa can not only continue ſupplying all the demands that offer for her ſurplus inhabitants, in the quantities it has hitherto done, but, if neceſſity required it, could ſpare thouſands, nay millions more, to the end of time; all of whom may be conſidered as reſcued

by

by this means from that certain death, which awaited them in their own country.

The vaſt country of Negroland is divided into a multitude of ſtates, the greateſt part of which have never yet been explored; but in thoſe which have been viſited by Europeans, the government is found to vary from the moſt abſolute tyranny in ſome, to ſomewhat leſs deſpotic and oppreſſive in others. The bulk of the people are ſlaves to a few freemen; and in ſome ſtates there is not an individual free but the prince: from every circumſtance of intelligence and obſervation, the general ſtate of the Negro, in Africa, is that of ſlavery and oppreſſion, in every ſenſe of the word. In *Dahomy*, the king is abſolute maſter of the life, liberty, and property, of every perſon in his dominions; and he ſports with them, with the moſt ſavage and wanton cruelty. Piles of their heads are placed as ornaments before his palace gates on feſtival days, and on every public occaſion; and the floors leading to his apartment are ſtrewed with their bodies, to impreſs thoſe who approach him with reſpect and awe. The area before his bed-

chamber,

chamber, is paved with the ſkulls of priſoners taken in war, that he may daily enjoy the ſavage gratification of literally trampling on the heads of his enemies. Parents have neither property, nor intereſt in their children, in the *Dahoman* territories; they belong entirely to the king, and are all taken, by his order, from their mothers, at an early age, and diſtributed in villages remote from the place of their nativity; where there is but little chance of their being ſeen, or, at leaſt, recognized by their parents afterwards. His motive for this is, that there may be no family connexions, no aſſociations that might be injurious to his unlimitted power. Each individual is detached, and unconnected; and, having no relative for whom he is intereſted, is ſolicitous only for his own ſafety, which he conſults by the moſt abject ſubmiſſion. There, paternal affections, and filial love ſcarcely exiſt: for mothers, inſtead of cheriſhing, endeavour to ſuppreſs thoſe attachments for their offspring, which, they are certain, will be violated, as ſoon as their children are able to undergo the fatigue of being removed from

from them. Yet, this worſt of ſlavery does not prevent population, as it, doubtleſs, would in any civilized part of the world, where liberty is prized above all other enjoyments. But the idea of ſlavery is different in an African. Had the Negro the love of rational freedom exiſting in his breaſt, it is next to impoſſible that he could act thus. But, alas! he knows nothing of this inestimable bleſſing, having never enjoyed it! The country which gave him birth, the ſoil from which he ſprung, produce no ſuch bloſſom; and, ſhould it ever appear, which is highly improbable, inſtead of the foſtering hand to bring it to maturity, the bloody and unrelenting arm of tyranny is ever ready to cut it down.

The credibility of theſe extraordinary facts does not depend upon mere hearſay: *Dahomy* is a maritime kingdom, in which the Britiſh, French, and Portugueſe have been permitted to erect forts for the protection of their trade; and the veracity of what is here related, is authenticated by the indubitable teſtimony of many who have reſided there, and have avowed it publicly.

The

The Africans have been in the practice, from time immemorial, of selling their countrymen, and never entertained any more doubt of their right to do so, than we do of sending delinquents to Botany Bay or to Tyburn, deeming it fair and just to dispose of their slaves, prisoners of war, and felons, according to their own established laws and customs. Great enormities they punish with death; but, unless it be in such despotic governments as *Dahomy*, few but criminals are sold to the Europeans, except prisoners taken in war; who would inevitably be put to death, did not a more profitable mode offer of disposing of them: and hence it is, that persons of some rank in their own country, sometimes become slaves in the West Indies and American colonies; but the house of bondage, strictly speaking, may be called a land of freedom to them: where, notwithstanding they do not enjoy pre-eminence, they may be comfortable; and where, although prevented from exercising cruelty on others, they are always protected themselves. Those who are guilty of theft, adultery, or the imputed crime of witchcraft,

if

if they eſcape death, are ſold for ſlaves. To deter them from the commiſſion of theſe crimes, their ſituation in foreign ſlavery is repreſented to be attended with the ſevereſt tortures; which, fortunately for them however, are not realized. Nor is it to be wondered at, in a country of ſo great extent, and ſo little civilization, that the greateſt part of the Africans, brought to the European colonies, have been previouſly condemned to ſlavery, for acts of delinquency; ſince Great Britain alone, under the ſuperior advantages of its religion, laws, and manners, produces annually above two thouſand convicts.

Since the labour of African ſlaves has been found neceſſary for the cultivation of the ſoil in the tropical climates of America, from the utter incapacity of white people to undergo that fatigue, every European nation poſſeſſing colonies there, has been ſolicitous to acquire a ſhare in this traffic; nor have the moſt ſcrupulous of them entertained a doubt of their right to purchaſe, what the Africans exerciſed a right to diſpoſe of.

Among the adventurers in this trade, the

Britiſh

Britiſh poſſeſs, at preſent, the greateſt ſhare. It was during the government of the Commonwealth, that Negroes were carried, in any numbers, to the Britiſh Weſt Indies, and then, chiefly to Barbadoes: a few indeed were brought to Virginia, by a Dutch ſhip, as early as 1620; but it was the Royal African Company that firſt carried on, from England, a vigorous commerce to Africa, during the reign of Charles II. We may form an opinion of the magnitude of it, in its moſt flouriſhing ſtate, prior to the Revolution in 1688, by conſidering that the company employed thirty ſhips annually, which delivered about five thouſand Negroes in the Weſt Indies. The increaſe of it to its preſent ſtate, may be attributed to the enterprizing ſpirit of the merchants; to the ſuperior addreſs of thoſe employed in the executive part of it; to the opulence of the manufacturers, which enables them to extend a credit to the former, beyond what can be had in any other country; and to the annual grants of parliament, for the maintenance of ſeveral forts and factories in Africa. From theſe concurring circumſtances, the Britiſh

planters

planters are ſupplied with Negroes, on more reaſonable terms than their neighbours; and a large ſurplus is left, which is diſpoſed of to the French and Spaniards for ſpecie, and other valuable commodities.

The importance of this trade to Great Britain may be determined from the following conſiderations: it immediately employs one hundred and eighty ſhips, about one hundred and forty of which ſail annually for Africa, with cargoes which amount nearly to a million ſterling, and which are compoſed of the productions of the Britiſh ſettlements in the Eaſt and Weſt Indies; and of Britiſh manufactures, to the value of ſeven hundred thouſand pounds. The circuitous returns of theſe cargoes are computed at a million and a half. The artificers and mechanics employed at Liverpool alone, receive one hundred thouſand pounds annually for labor and materials employed in equipping the ſhips engaged in it; and excluſive of the large ſums paid for ſeamen's wages, the commiſſions and privilege of the captains and officers amount at leaſt to fifty thouſand pounds annually; which are gene-

rally realized here, and have contributed greatly to the rapid increaſe of that commercial town.

The African trade, connected as it is with the Weſt Indian commerce, and with the trade to the remaining continental colonies, and Newfoundland fiſhery, is of the utmoſt conſequence to the employment of many thouſands of our fellow ſubjects; to the naval power of Britain; and to the royal revenues; all which are conjoined by ſympathetic ties. The value of three millions at leaſt of domeſtic manufactures, excluſive of other merchandize, annually finds a profitable vent by means of the African and Weſt Indian trades; and above five millions of property, ariſing from the labor of Negro ſlaves, employed in the Weſt Indian iſlands, is yearly imported from thence; which contributes not leſs than a million and an half annually to the revenue of this kingdom. * To carry on this immenſe traffic,

* As this eſtimate of the importance of the Weſt Indian and African trades was made from memory, without any documents at hand to refer to, it may be ſatisfactory to the reader

fic, and to ſupply theſe iſlands with lumber and proviſions from the continental colonies and Newfoundland fiſhery, gives conſtant employment to at leaſt a thouſand ſhips,

reader to ſee it compared with the ſtatements in the public accounts, which were laid before the Houſe of Commons in the laſt ſeſſion of parliament: with this view, the following extracts from the public accounts are annexed.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Exports to the Sugar Colonies from Chriſtmas 1786 to Chriſtmas 1787. | £1,612,009 | 5 | 10 |
| Exports to Africa in the ſame period. | 679,617 | 6 | 0 |
| | £2,291,626 | 11 | 10 |

N. B. It ſhould be obſerved, that the cuſtom-houſe value of the goods exported is only three-fourths of their real value; which brings the amount of the exports nearly to the ſum quoted in the text.

To enter into a detail of the ſeveral articles, would exceed my limits; I ſhall therefore only remark a few of the principal ones that were ſent to the Weſt Indies: of theſe the amount was as follows:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Britiſh linens | £508,618 | 8 | 4 |
| Ditto Woollens | 98,581 | 11 | 9 |
| Iron Ware | 167,497 | 16 | 10 |
| Copper Ware | 44,291 | 13 | 0 |
| Fifty thouſand barrels of Britiſh herrings, caught on our own ſhores by Britiſh fiſhermen | £55,991 | 2 | 9 |

ſhips, and to above twenty thouſand mariners. To enumerate the fatal conſequences that would inevitably enſue from a check given to this extenſive commerce, much more

Imports from the Sugar Colonies from Chriſtmas 1786 to Chriſtmas 1787:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sugar, 1,926,741 cwt. valued at 5d. per lb. | £4,495,729 | 0 | 0 |
| Rum, 2,253,657 gallons, at 6s. per gal. | 676,097 | 2 | 0 |
| Coffee, 1,126,073 lb. at 80s. per cwt. | 40,216 | 17 | 0 |
| Cocoa, 281,111 lb. at 50s. per cwt. | 6,272 | 10 | 0 |
| | £5,218,315 | 9 | 0 |

N. B. No accounts were delivered of the amount of the following articles, viz. cotton, ginger, pimento, dying woods, aloes and other drugs, mahogany, fuſtic, lignum vitæ, and other woods; but they are calculated as follows, viz.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cotton, 40,000 bags, at 25l. each | £1,000,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Ginger, 4000 bags, at 2l. each | 8,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Pimento, 12,000 ditto, at 5l. each | 60,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Woods, valued at | 25,000 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1,093,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Amount of imports, as above, | 5,218,315 | 9 | 0 |
| | £6,311,315 | 9 | 0 |

N. B. It is ſuppoſed the cottons imported amount to eighty thouſand bags of 240lb. each; but as part are the growth of foreign iſlands, they are ſtated at only half the quantity.

Imports

more the ſuppreſſion of it, exceeds the preſent limits of this ſhort ſketch, but they ſhall be hinted in the ſequel.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Imports from Africa from Chriſtmas 1786 to Chriſtmas 1787, ſuch as ivory, gold duſt, &c. as ſtated in the public accounts | £ | 106,245 | 19 3 |
| Value of 38,000 Negroes, imported into the Weſt Indies, &c. at 40l. ſterling each | | 1,520,000 | 0 0 |
| | £ | 1,626,245 | 19 3 |

REVENUE.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cuſtoms.—Sugar | £ | 1,187,814 | 12 2 |
| Drawback | | 122,957 | 1 9 |
| Nett | £ | 1,064,857 | 10 5 |
| Rum | £ | 46,943 | 10 0 |
| Drawback on 864,313 gallons exported | | 17,899 | 4 2 |
| Nett | £ | 29,044 | 5 10 |
| Exciſe on 1,389,344 gallons of rum conſumed, at 3s. 7d. per gallon | £ | 248,924 | 1 0 |
| Coffee from 10th May to Chriſtmas 1787 | | 69,087 | 9 11 |
| Cocoa from ditto | | 10,916 | 2 0 |
| | | 328,927 | 12 11 |
| Cuſtoms on Sugar, as above | | 1,064,857 | 10 5 |
| Ditto on Rum | | 29,044 | 5 10 |
| Total | £ | 1,422,829 | 9 2 |

The adventurers in this trade, who have ſeen for near a century paſt, the Society for propagating Chriſtianity, compoſed of the Archbiſhop of Canterbury, the Biſhop of London, and many pious doctors of the eſtabliſhed church, deriving, as maſters, a yearly income from the labor of their Negroe ſlaves in the Weſt Indies, which is appropriated to the increaſe of Chriſtianity in the world, could not conſider it as contrary to the ſpirit of the Scriptures, or to the principles of morality: nor could the adventurers regard this traffic as inconſiſtent with the natural rights of mankind, when they read in the ſtatute of 9 and 10 of King William (which was made avowedly for extending the trade to Africa), "*That this trade was* "*highly beneficial to this kingdom*;" a declaration of a king, who was the patron of liberty, and of a parliament that had vindicated the natural rights of mankind; and when they read alſo in the ſtat. of 23 Geo. II. "*That the trade to Africa is very advantageous* "*to Great Britain, and* neceſſary *to the planta-* "*tions.*" Which act was made by a whig king, and a whig parliament; who, when they

they diſſolved the late African Company, granted a large ſum of money as a compenſation for their rights, in order that a trade thus neceſſary and advantageous, might be carried on with greater energy and ſucceſs.

Encouraged by theſe, and various other acts of parliament, which declared the African trade to be highly beneficial to this nation, many merchants engaged their fortunes in it; nor could they imagine the *purchaſe* of Negroes from thoſe ſtates of Africa (who have the ſame right to diſpoſe of them as the parliament has to inflict the pains of baniſhment or death) or conſider the *ſale* of them as illegal, when they knew that many able lawyers, learned judges, and illuſtrious chancellors had expreſsly declared this purchaſe and ſale to be lawful; and to have transferred to the maſter ſuch a property as could not be affected by local changes, or ſubſequent baptiſm: and when the adventurers know alſo, that in conformity to the declarations of theſe judges and lawyers, the ſtatute of the 5th of his late and of the 13th of his preſent Majeſty, ſubjected the Negroes in the Weſt Indian Iſlands, as well as

the lands which they labored, to the payment of all debts, owing either to his Majesty, or to any of his subjects; and directed these Negroes to be sold, like any other chattels, for satisfaction of such debts. In consequence of which, the five hundred thousand Negroes, now belonging to the planters in those islands, are pledged by the legislature, and by the nation, for payment of the debts that are due, either to the British merchants or manufacturers, or to the subjects of foreign princes; who, by a late act of parliament, have been encouraged and enabled to lend money to these planters, on the security of their lands, and of the labor of their Negroes.

Yet this trade, so highly beneficial to the adventurers, and important to the state; a trade sanctioned by the clergy, supported by the judges, and authorized by the laws, has lately been condemned both in principle and practice. By the law and usage of parliament, the most trivial right of the most inconsiderable subject is never taken away, even for the public good itself, without a manifest necessity, and a full compensation.

Yet

Yet an attempt has been made, and meaſures are unremittingly purſued, to deprive the Britiſh planters, merchants and manufacturers, of the advantage of this important traffic; and under a pretence of regulation, reſtrictions have already been impoſed, which ſtrike at its exiſtence: but though the liberty of Negroes ſeems now to be the favorite idea, the liberty of Britons to purſue their lawful occupations ſhould not be forgotten: for the principle which has raiſed the commerce and navigation of this country, and with them the landed intereſt and revenues of the kingdom, from inconſiderable beginnings to their preſent greatneſs, is the *right* which every man in it poſſeſſes, to carry on his own buſineſs, in the way moſt advantageous to himſelf and the ſociety, without any ſudden interruption in the purſuit of it; and the *conſciouſneſs* which he has, of the ſteady protection of the laws, in the proſecution of what has been ſhewn to be legal.

At a time when neighbouring nations, our rivals in commerce as well as arms, are laviſhing unprecedented bounties, to extend

their

their African trade, and endeavor to promote it by every poſſible encouragement, an aſſociation has been formed here for the avowed purpoſe of *aboliſhing* it; who ſuffering themſelves to be impoſed upon, by lending too credulous an ear to that kind of information which they ſought with more avidity than juſtice, without duly conſidering by what means, or by or from whom it was procured, have labored to inflame the paſſions, and prejudice the minds of the community, by various publications, containing the moſt groſs miſtatements of facts, and miſrepreſentation of characters. It is an eaſy taſk to draw in glowing colors, that imaginary picture of human woe, which ſhall excite compaſſion, and rouze indignation; and in this ſtyle of painting the ſolicitors for the abolition have almoſt ſucceeded to their wiſhes: by their perſonal aſſiduities, ſubſcriptions, and publications; by their circular letters to the mayors of corporations, and addreſſes to grand juries, they have raiſed the torch of civil conteſt in the realm, which may eventually ſpread the flame of reſiſtance throughout the colonies. Their clamors

have

have reached the legiſlature; and they who are concerned in the trade, have been called upon to defend their rights and injured reputation, at the bar of both houſes of parliament.

It has there appeared in evidence, that to *ſerve a particular purpoſe*, the mortality of the mariners, and of the Negroes, had been exaggerated beyond the bounds of probability and truth: that the African trade, ſo far from being deſtructive to the lives of Britiſh ſeamen, in the degree aſſerted, is, in fact a nurſery for training up men to that uſeful profeſſion.* That this trade is carried on as much to the eaſe and comfort of thoſe that are the ſubjects of it, and alſo of thoſe who conduct it, as it is poſſible for human ingenuity to deviſe. That the ſhips employed in it, are ſo peculiarly conſtructed for the ac-

* For it is in this trade alone that thoſe who are deſirous of embracing a ſea life, at an age too advanced to commence an apprenticeſhip, can find employment; as the crews of veſſels in any other trade, conſiſt of ſeamen and apprentices only: but in this, one half at leaſt of each ſhip's company is compoſed of landſmen, young men, who in two or three voyages acquire as much profeſſional knowledge as qualifies them afterwards for any ſtation of a ſea life.

commodation

commodation of the Negroes, as to be unſuitable for any other trade. That the opinion, which has been induſtriouſly propagated, of theſe ſhips being unequal to the numbers which were ſaid to be crowded in them, is groundleſs; as appears from a ſurvey and admeaſurement of them, by an experienced naval officer appointed by government.* That on the voyage from Africa to the Weſt Indies, the Negroes are well fed, comfortably lodged, and have every poſſible attention paid to their health, cleanlineſs, and convenience. That the captain's cabbin is appropriated to the uſe of ſuch as are ſick: where proper care, and medical aid, are duly adminiſtred to them; and that, by an admirable regulation, the emoluments of the captains and officers, employed in this trade, are connected with, and depend upon, the health and good condition of thoſe whom they have the charge of conveying. The mode of ob-

* In every inſtance of thoſe ſhips which delivered their cargoes at the Britiſh Weſt India iſlands, it appears that (to evade *a duty upon tonnage* which is paid there) their tonnage was reported to the cuſtom houſes, at *one third* or more *below their real burthen*.

taining

taining Negro ſlaves in Africa, has been demonſtrated to be in a way perfectly fair, and equitable; by a barter with the natives. The crime of *kidnapping*, as it is termed, with which the traders to Africa have been reproached, proves to be extremely unfrequent: for the African committee, whoſe buſineſs it is to take cognizance of ſuch an offence, and for which the law inflicts a heavy penalty, have reported, that only *one inſtance* of it has come before them in the courſe of near *forty years*. It has alſo been ſhewn, that, in conſequence of this trade, many innocent lives are ſpared, that would otherwiſe be ſacrificed to the ſuperſtitious rites and ceremonies of the country; many priſoners of war exempted from torture, and death: and the puniſhment of many crimes commuted from death in Africa to life in America: and finally, that it is the lot of moſt of thoſe that are brought to the Colonies, who, generally ſpeaking, were ſlaves in their own country, only to exchange a black maſter for a white one.

That the wars which have always exiſted in Africa, have no connection with the ſlave-trade, is evident from the univerſality of the

practice

practice of it between communities in a ſavage ſtate. The oldeſt writers, as *Leo*, and others, have repreſented the Africans as living in a continual ſtate of war and rapine, long before the commerce with Europeans was introduced among them; and no man of ſenſe can doubt but the ſame practice would ſtill continue, if no trade exiſted, and with greater frequency. Beſides the motives of ambition and reſentment, which the African has, in common with other nations of men, the turbulent and iraſcible diſpoſition of a Negro prompts him to harraſs and diſpute with his neighbour, upon the moſt trivial provocations. Lured by the love of plunder, before he ever ſaw an European commodity (as the value of an article depends upon the eſtimation it holds in the fancy of him who covets it), the rude productions of the country, the trinkets of gold, or ivory, &c. were as much the objects of his deſire formerly, as the acquiſition of European manufactures can be at preſent. So far are the Whites from being acceſſary to theſe wars, as has been unjuſtly alleged; it is notorious, that the Europeans trading there, deprecate a war as the greateſt inconvenience

inconvenience that can happen to them: trade is entirely ſuſpended during its continuance; and the term of their voyages is thereby protracted much beyond the uſual time. Hence ariſes an inevitable increaſe of expence, and an additional riſk of ſickneſs and mortality, which cannot be compenſated by a few additional ſlaves, that may occaſionally be brought to market in conſequence of it.' The aſſertion, that farther ſupplies of ſlaves from Africa, are not neceſſary to the cultivation of our iſlands, ſcarcely merits a ſerious refutation. It is dictated by the ſame miſtaken policy, that preferred the wilds of Canada, at the cloſe of a former war, to the poſſeſſion of the truly valuable Sugar Iſlands; which, after being wreſted from our enemies and rivals, at the expence of much blood and treaſure, were again reſtored to them in an evil hour. But are no new ſettlements to be made, nor old ones to be extended? Is induſtry to be limited, and improvement prohibited, in the moſt valuable of all our foreign poſſeſſions; where a ſupply from propagation alone, adequate to the ſervices required, is never to be expected. And are princely territories,

ritories, millions of property, to be hazarded upon crude experiments? of whoſe ſucceſs ſome few may poſſibly hope; but of whoſe failure few indeed can have a doubt?

How the Negroes, occupied in the Colonies, are now treated, remains next to be conſidered; and cannot be better related than nearly in the words of a reſpectable writer*, who has very lately favored the public with his obſervations on this ſubject.

Negro property is an object of ſuch value and importance to the proprietor, that he is diſpoſed to cheriſh it by every prudent and humane method: independent of what he owes as a man, and a Chriſtian, he feels an adventitious affection for it, reſulting from intereſt. Hence it is, that the happineſs and miſery of Negroes, in the Weſt Indies, depend almoſt totally on themſelves. If a Negro is ſlothful or flagitious, he is, like raſcals and drones of ſociety in every well regulated community, poor and miſerable; and ſubject to correction, as a puniſhment for his own vices, and for the inſtruction of others: but, on the contrary, if he is in-

* Hector M'Neil, Eſq. of Jamaica.

duſtrious

duſtrious in his own concerns, and attentive to the intereſt of his ſuperior, mild in temper, and tractable in diſpoſition, he is entitled to indulgencies, which thouſands, even in this country, would be happy to enjoy.—The habitations of the ſlaves, on every eſtate, are ſituated near the dwelling-houſe of the owner, or overſeer; that they may be under more immediate inſpection. Theſe are, in general, comfortable and commodious; with a garden to each, encircled with plantain, banana, and orange trees; and ſtocked with roots and vegetables, for domeſtic uſes; and even a large ſurplus to ſpare, which is carried occaſionally to market, to exchange for thoſe little neceſſaries and luxuries, which they wiſh to enjoy. Beſides this, there is a portion of land on every eſtate, called the *Negro-grounds*, of which each ſlave is allowed as much as he can cultivate, for his own uſe. This land, from the fertility of the ſoil, requires only a ſmall portion of occaſional labor; a few hours in a week is ſufficient, and the Negro is allowed, independent of every Sunday, which he has to himſelf throughout the year, one day in a fortnight,

for * eight months of it, for cultivating his grounds. In these habitations, there is an arrangement of apartments, and propriety of furniture; a supply of utensils, and even a parade of apparel, little to be expected in the possession of slaves. They have each their flyes of hogs, and little flocks of poultry; some of them reserved for sale, and the rest appropriated to their evening's repast; this, with a comfortable night's rest, enables them to return with vigor to the next morning's work, which, however strange it may seem, is not so hard as that of most of the laboring poor in Britain. But what renders the situation of the Negro peculiarly comfortable, is the provision made for him during sickness, and old age. On the first symptoms of indisposition, he is instantly exempted from all labor, and lodged in a house particularly constructed for the purpose, where he is visited daily by a practitioner of medicine, supplied with fresh viands, vegetables, and even wine, attended constantly by a nurse, who acts likewise as an under

* Crop-time occupies the other four.

medical

medical aſſiſtant, and is not deſired, or even allowed to reſume labor, until his health and ſtrength enable him to undergo its fatigues. Let indiſpoſition continue never ſo long; no immediate loſs, no confuſion or derangement in his little property, is the conſequence. Poverty, want, and affliction, are, by no means, the concomitants of his ſick-bed: every thing, through the aſſiſtance of his fellow-labourers and the direction of his ſuperiors, goes on, and is attended to, in the ſame way, as if he was immediately on the ſpot: his grounds are worked; his ſtock raiſed; his fruits and products carried to market, by his family or connections; and as he is amply ſupplied with every neceſſary during his confinement, inſtead of being poorer, he comes out of his hoſpital a richer man than when he went in. When old age has rendered his farther exertions uſeleſs, it may be preſumed, that ſome property has been acquired, and a ſituation of comfort eſtabliſhed.—Theſe he is allowed to enjoy unmoleſted, while the uſual proportion of proviſions and clothing are annually given to him. His children, and his

children's children, his friends and former fellow-labourers; his countrymen, and fellow passengers, are all near him, and are all ready to administer their helps and consolation. In short, instead of wretchedness, and chilling penury, old age, in this state, often wears away and snaps its slender thread as gently and perhaps as imperceptibly, as in any country whatever. It is a fact worthy of observation, that a Negro slave in the West Indies, has scarcely ever been heard to express a desire to return to his own country; nor, of the many who have obtained their freedom there, has one put it into practice: but, on the contrary, even newly imported Negroes, when threatened by the overseer, upon some fault or neglect of theirs, to be sent back again, are seriously alarmed at it.

To the eye of candor and moderation I address this picture of what does really exist. But to the prejudiced,—to those who are instigated to calumnies the most harsh, and proceedings the most unjust, upon the slightest grounds, I have nothing to offer, because I know that the opinions they have hastily

haſtily adopted without any juſtifiable evidence, they will not quite ſo haſtily give up. No perſons are or can be ſo well informed of the facts I have before ſtated, as the planters and merchants reſident, or who have reſided in the Weſt Indies, and in whoſe view they have paſſed. But the *abolitioniſts* very artfully endeavor to put aſide every teſtimony of this ſort, by inſinuating, that they are intereſted parties, and therefore their evidence muſt be deſtitute of credibility. It is rather hard, that the teſtimony of many thouſands of Britiſh ſubjects, among whom are men of unqueſtioned integrity and diſtinguiſhed moral character, endued with as much virtue and honor as any other claſs of men in the world, ſhould be leſs credible than that of hireling ſcriblers, profligate common ſailors, and the ſcum of the people. But be it ſo; and then let us appeal for the truth to other witneſſes;—to the governors, and other public officers, civil, military, and naval; who holding offices under the crown, have occaſionally lived in the Weſt Indian iſlands, and are undoubtedly competent to declare what they have obſerved. Let us

alſo

alſo appeal to the acts of our colonial legiſlature, particularly *Jamaica*; where, from the year 1781 to the preſent, the *General Aſſembly* have been framing and enacting a ſucceſſion of laws, all calculated to meliorate the condition of their Negroes by gradual improvements. To have done leſs, would ill have accorded with their known humanity; but to have done more, would have brought no credit to their wiſdom; for to anticipate thoſe more enlarged privileges and franchiſes, which time and maturer civilization alone muſt gradually effectuate, would be folly, or rather frenzy in the extreme. The unexceptionable atteſtations of theſe laws, theſe governors, admirals, generals, and other officers of high rank and character, we may very ſafely oppoſe to all the hearſay ſtories, paragraphs, eſſays, pamphlets and hand-bills, which the *abolitioniſts* can poſſibly ſcrape together, in ſupport of their petitions to parliament.

There now only remains of the propoſed plan of this ſhort ſketch, to point out briefly what would be the probable, nay, the inevitable conſequence of the ſurrender of a trade, which

which is the connecting medium of our foreign with our domeſtic commerce. If it were taken out of the chain, of which it compoſes ſo conſiderable a link, and upon which our manufactures ſo immediately depend, every improvement in the Weſt Indian iſlands would immediately ceaſe, and a diminution of the produce of the lands, now under cultivation there, would ſhortly follow. The export of Britiſh manufactures, which to Africa and the Colonies amount to nearly three millions ſterling annually, would ſoon be reduced to nothing. The immenſe ſums, owing to this country from the Weſt Indies, would for ever remain unpaid; and innumerable bankruptcies would follow at home. From the inevitable decreaſe of the import of Weſt Indian productions, there would be ſuch a deficiency of the national revenue, as the impoſition of freſh taxes, upon a people deprived of their accuſtomed reſources of opulence and induſtry, could not poſſibly replace. If we ſhould ſeek to replace this deficiency, by importing the products of the *Foreign* Weſt Indian iſlands, —this indeed would be a truly national *felo*

*de*

*de ſe.* A decay of public credit, and a depreciation of government ſecurities, would enſue, from an inability to raiſe the public ſupplies. Our national importance would quickly decline, and be known to the next generation, only by the page of hiſtory. After ſo flagrant an act of oppreſſion and impolicy, the merchants could no longer confide in government, for the continuation of thoſe privileges which they had for ages enjoyed. This reflection would naturally throw a damp on all future enterprize, in every branch of foreign trade, as well as domeſtic manufacture; for however the minds of ſome men may be inflamed at this moment, and however ſtrenuous they may be in oppoſition to the African ſlave trade, there muſt a time come, when every Engliſhman, who is capable of reflecting at all, will weigh the injuſtice of this proceeding, abſtracted from every conſideration of feeling or policy; and will then perceive the inſtability of all commercial eſtabliſhments in a country, where the miſtaken zeal of a *few* could excite the legiſlature, ſo groſsly to invade the rights of individuals. Theſe and many other

evils,

evils, muſt be reaſonably expected from the *abolition* of a trade, which we *may* relinquiſh; but which *cannot* be taken from us, by the jealouſy of foreign power: in this political ſelf-murther we muſt be our own executioners.

To prevent theſe calamities, a bill is now framing, from local knowledge and practical experience; not a bill of mere theory and ſpeculation, ſuch as lately appeared, but a bill to obviate every reaſonable complaint, and eſtabliſh every neceſſary regulation in the African trade: and that ſuch a bill may meet the approbation of every branch of the Britiſh legiſlature, and be paſſed into a law, ought to be the earneſt wiſh of every patriotic *Briton*.

FINIS.

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